

Franciscan

SOCIETY OF SAINT FRANCIS Vol. 5 No. 3 September, 1993

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MISSION

Mission is about people; but about God first. John V. Taylor links the two, developing the implications of the Three-in-One God. 'Mission Statements' are common now in all kinds of enterprises; they represent aspiration, if not always performance. Some of us have tried to articulate our mission in CSF and SSF. Stephen Platten sets the mission of our Three Orders in the wider context. Francis was keener on getting on with the mission than talking about it. But let's hope the talking helps.

The mission of the Friars and Sisters

by Brother Bernard

'Mission for me,' says Brother Benedict, 'is sitting in our chapel, a converted bedroom in our flat, in the midst of a busy and noisy housing estate, saying the last Office of the day, Compline, the window pane reflecting the candle flame and passers-by glancing up and saying "There those brothers are at it again."'

That quotation, along with all the data for this article, is part of one response from a request for an A4 length 'Mission Statement' which I sent to various brothers and sisters. I take responsibility for the selection and arrangement of the quotations. I am struck by the commitment to prayer in

almost all the replies. Brother Benedict, writing from Glasgow where he lives on the Barrowfield Housing Scheme, says '...without prayer we stand in danger of projecting ourselves rather than proclaiming Christ.'

But the brothers' life there is not only

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prayer: it is people. The flat used to be overrun with children at all hours, I gather now that it is an older age-group and the hours are more limited; hospitality remains a priority. Then there is the involvement in the life of the estate in Tenants' Associations and self-help groups: there are efforts to form a new co-operative.

'Mission,' says Benedict, 'is about being converted oneself; by being constantly surprised at finding God's face reflected in the poor and disadvantaged. It is not the case of taking God to such places: it is discovering that God has been there all the time.' 'Love alone is the missionary way to win people to God.'

From a very different setting, Brother Ramon develops both the personal and the corporate aspects of mission:

'Am I a forgiven person?' he asks, 'a forgiving person?' 'A reconciling person?' And then, 'do I relate in a loving way, sympathising and sharing wider concerns with a vision, global and universal?' 'The danger of mission is "exclusivism"; the joy of mission is that we have a place in the scheme of things - a pilgrimage to share with others.'

And Ramon, from his hermitage, includes people of other faiths as companions in pilgrimage.

Brother Angelo is a memorable preacher, so he links mission and incarnation with the words Renunciation (Philippians 2:5-9): Risk (Luke 1:38): and Revelation (John 15:12). And he stresses our community witness, the something that is distinctive of SSF, something that we are attempting to live authentically. He is glad that we send sisters and brothers to share for a time in the ongoing mission of a parish, but is sure of three other things -

- we can't do the mission *for* others;
- each mission event we undertake has to be carefully worked out for that particular situation;
- SSF should consider more careful selection and skilled training for its mission work of this kind.'

Sister Teresa sees as one of our privileges that we have time and space for individuals, and that we can offer hospitality, make room for others. Acceptance is one of our gifts. But she uses an unusual word when she says we also 'dis-ease' people. I think she means that we have to discomfort the comfortable and in some way challenge their assumptions

about life and how it should be lived. Clearly the life of Francis challenged people, though I expect he was unselfconscious about it. And when he preached he preached penance, that is a penitence that showed itself in change of life, conversion. As a community we now live in a great variety of settings, many of them in inner cities. Living the gospel among people is our calling, but so is it of the Third Order brothers and sisters, and indeed of all Christians. So she summarises by saying that all of us seek to

'discern God working in the world to redeem and renew it, to reveal God's love to all people and in all creation and to challenge society which is unjust, intolerant and degrading to a large number of people.'

Sister Joyce puts her weight on this discernment and stresses that it involves 'listening both to those still in the institutional Church as well as those outside it.'

Brother Peter makes a valuable summary of our Principles: he lists elements in our mission, but in no particular order:

- to establish, proclaim and herald the Reign of God
- to make known the Good News of Jesus Christ
- to care for the sick, the lonely and the homeless
- to be the Church and to work for the unity of the churches
- to assist the healing of the nations
- to promote a fairer share of the

world's resources

- to befriend the stranger and the alien and the orphan
- to oppose injustice
- to pray for the needs of the world, and to pray that people, and ourselves, may move deeper into the mystery of God.'

He goes on to paraphrase our Principles (day 22), saying:

'not by use of many words but by allowing the life we lead to speak to others in a way that will make them want to know the source and inspiration of our joy.'

The Principles for that day begin with the words 'But chiefest of all forms of service that the brothers and sisters can offer must ever be the effort to show others in his beauty and power the Christ who is the inspiration and joy of their own lives.' Reading the answers sent in to the question of mission, I am excited to notice how nearly they reflect our Principles; reading the reports from houses for the year, I see the variety of ways we are seeking to do this.

Sister Hilary's summary has a more personal note. She stresses the need for each of us to become the person we are, to be ourselves with integrity. From this base she hopes that we can be of help to others, in such things as helping others to move from knowing about God to knowing God, discerning God's work in their own lives and in the wider world. By these means people come to a clearer understanding and so discover their own ministry and responsibilities for mission.

If we look back to Francis, we see that he was very practical in his care and love, and that from a contemplative base, he went out and found God in all things and all people. His humanness speaks through the ages and especially in our time when the needs of the environment, the quest for peace and the creation of universal good will are prominent goals.

But when Francis preached, whether in the open air, a cathedral or to the community, he preached a challenging Gospel-based message about God's mission in Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to convert our lives in fellowship with the Holy Catholic Church. Within the range of mission - as wide as God's mission in the world - we all have to go on rediscovering our call and specific mission expressed in life and word. In our Western secular culture it is the word, the right word, true to the Word, true to the Church, that takes the seeking.



Minister's Letter



Br Damian, Minister Provincial of the First Order Brothers, writes:

One of my predecessors wrote in this column, back in the early seventies, that Franciscans would never miss an opportunity for a celebration. This was not a reference simply to the fact that brothers will always be in the scrum at the buffet table of a parish do, but rather that we are likely also to take the record for celebrating occasions!

Well, this month marks twenty years for our brothers in Belfast and also in Edinburgh. 1973 saw a considerable expansion in the first Order with signs of growth also emerging in North Wales and Tanzania. However, we have learnt that seeds that fall into the ground do not always spring up for immediate evaluation. Yet in Belfast and Edinburgh there will be some extra hearty praise sung this month as the Society celebrates twenty years of its foundation in those two cities.

For Belfast those years have been in the context of the long drawn out setting of the Troubles, so called. It was said in my time there in the eighties that every conversation ended with a reference to the Troubles.

Naturally so, as so much energy was spent on 'business as usual' - the sheer determination that London and Warrington have also been learning of late, not to let the hatred supersede the love, nor the injury pardon. How much indeed the rest of us admire that amazing Ulster ability to contribute humour into so much loss.

Twenty years on from our humble beginnings in the Shankill, the brothers and sisters have become remarkably accepted on both sides of the community. Now prayers are said at 1 pm each day in Belfast Cathedral for peace and goodwill, due largely to the initiative of Br David Jardine - and there is much more.

So we celebrate twenty years of our extended mission in Ulster - the chance to live Gospel precepts in a tired and battered community of faith.

Our celebration is most worthily marked by the visit of the Rt Revd Sir Paul Reeves, presently chaplain at the United Nations. He preaches at St. John's Church, Malone on Friday evening, 10th September. This celebration will gather not only a host of friends, Companions and Tertiaries, but also many brothers and sisters who have served in the Order there since 1973.

The Edinburgh venture began in November of the same year, down at Pilton, a large and deprived scheme where we were invited to make our home. We took two flats opposite St. David's Church whose rectory we later came to occupy when we took charge of that small Episcopal church. It is there that our celebration will take place on Thursday, 16th September. Again

this will draw together the whole family of SSF, near and far.

Behind these specific celebrations the whole family come together at this time to celebrate Francis himself, and with thanksgiving for La Verna and the Stigmata of our Patron. All around us, it seems, are signs of the vast continuing suffering of so many people, in the flesh, through sickness or through wounds inflicted by one upon another.

There are, too, the almost more hurtful sufferings that we can impose on each other by mental cruelty and alienation. The visible marks of Francis' stigmata link us to the deepest causes of hurt which we identify with the Cross of Jesus Christ. By his wounds we are healed, and by all those wounded healers that follow in the way of Christ's Cross, there is a path of transformation, of hope, of the victory of love which is our constant cause for celebration.

Let us be reminded in this season of our true mission as Franciscans - brothers and sisters - that as we find ways to recognise and then identify with our hurting world, we shall also learn what it is that we are really celebrating, be it after twenty years or two thousand. God, grant us true penitence and grace to bear the Cross for love of Him.

Damian SSF

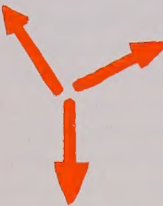
Mission aims of SSF

This statement was adopted by the Joint Chapter of CSF and SSF at Pentecost 1993, having been drafted by members of the Third and First Orders at a conference on Mission in Plaistow, January 1993.

1. It is a basic intention of the mission of the Society of Saint Francis to witness to the character of Christianity as a corporate experience. The nature of the Trinitarian God and his reconciling work in Jesus Christ invite all Christians to live together as a sign and a foretaste of God's final hope for all creation. In the Spirit and yet in humility, Franciscans attempt to give expression to what it means to be the Body of Christ and to encourage those in particular contexts as they persevere to make this a reality.
2. Franciscans seek to be part of the renewal and the revitalising of the Church. Because we share all the privileges and responsibilities of being members of the people of God, we acknowledge our calling to be used by God in his loving purpose of bringing in the fullness of the Kingdom. Joyful proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom is of the essence of Franciscanism. It is centred in acknowledging and confessing the centrality of the Cross and our Lord's victory upon it.
3. As we are sent out and as we meet together with others, in a genuine exchange, we will look for and discover how God is truly at work among his people. God's loving purposes will be revealed through each other and in the worship and the sacraments in which we share. Indeed, God will have gone before us and prepared the ground for all the encounters we will make in his Name.
4. Worship and prayer are at the heart of our life in Christ, and so the daily Offices and Eucharist are central to the way we structure our life. Our activity should be seen to grow out of a profound stillness. As we wait on God we become attuned to the ways in which God is already at work in the world around us, and we are strengthened to change what needs changing and confront what needs confronting.
5. We recognise that some inherited structures can be restricting, and share in the search for a freedom for people to express more fully who they are or long to be.
6. We will seek to encourage and enable Christians to discover and share in God's mission to society, to live out Kingdom values and communicate them to others.
7. As Franciscans, we have a particular calling to listen to the voice of the broken, the marginalised and the poor, and to recognise in them the face of Christ. In our culture this means, in the first place, the economically poor and marginalised, who have been excluded from society and denied justice. But we also have a ministry to be interpreters of their poverty to others, to hear the voice of the deep spiritual poverty of all in our society, and to enter into the depth of our own frailty.

The mission of God in the world and the Church

by John V. Taylor

 **'Missio Dei' - I am not happy with the way this term has come to be bandied about in recent decades, as though it covers anything and everything that Christians, especially ecumenical conferences, want to busy themselves with. Though it may sound stuffily pedantic to say so, I believe that talk about the mission of God becomes clearly focused only when we have God-as-Trinity in mind.**



The National Gallery, London

The Trinity with Christ Crucified by an unknown Austrian artist of the 15th Century. It represents the Trinity, with God the Father seated supporting the crucified Christ, and the Dove of the Holy Spirit between them, a type of image known as the Throne of Mercy.

God's being is beyond our mental grasp, but the idea of trinity - three distinct identities in a single personal being - need not seem strange, since we meet it in our own experience. Consider any totally committed, self-giving woman or man - a mother living with her children, an artist dedicated to his creations or a scientist to her sphere of research, a liberator devoted to the victims of oppression or a mystic to the vision of God. Each one of these men or women will actually be conscious of themselves at different levels in three ways, so distinct that you might almost say they have three selves.

At one level they are all born self-givers,

fulfilled in spending themselves for others, and if they were not doing so for one particular purpose they would have to find another. If you asked them why, they would probably say simply, 'That's how I am'. This is the aspect of the totally self-giving God which we call 'The Father' because it is God's self-giving nature, God's will to pour love toward some other, which is the origin of all else. When asked for a name, for a self-definition, the Father can reply only, 'I am what I am'.

But the mother, the artist, the scientist, the liberator and the others who give themselves are, at another level, conscious of being the self that is given. Behind them,

as it were, is the will of the self-giver which they must obey, the purpose of the giving self which they must strive to carry through. Ask them why and, at this different level, they will talk about a task to be fulfilled, an inner drive, a call. They do not say 'I am', but 'I must', and they say it with joy. And it is this essentially given and obedient aspect of God's being that we call 'God the Son', because it is the divine response to the divine, originating will to give. We hear that response made incarnate in the voice of Jesus: 'I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.' 'He who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone.'

There is yet a third level of self-awareness in those who are wholly dedicated. Self-awareness is, perhaps, the wrong word, for at this level self is forgotten, and they are aware only of the object of their self-giving. Ask them now why they persevere and they will answer: 'See what lovely children they are, how beautifully this equation works out, what worth there is in these disregarded people of mine!' Their fulfilment, their true identity, is in the 'other', whatever that other may be. And this aspect of God's self-giving we call 'The Holy Spirit' - God within and made one with the object of the eternal love.

It is in these categories, then, that Christians should think about their mission if they want to call it the mission of God. This means, in the first place, that we start by asking ourselves: What is the unchanging purpose of the self-giving God towards this world and how does it apply to this place? Love seeks neither possession nor domination, but a reciprocal relationship with that in which it delights.

So God's age-long purpose has been to bring into being, to give being, to some 'other-than-God' capable of responding freely and responsibly to the love God lavishes upon it. More precisely this means that God seeks in each place a human community indwelt by love and truth, able to delight as God delights in their own natural human existence and creativity, and their solidarity with one another and all creatures, and responding, each according to his or her own experience and capability, to the God who loves them one and all. Call it, if you like, the Kingdom of God.

Starting with the divine will and purpose - God the Father - in view, and never losing sight of it, will result in a view of our part - the Church's part - in the mission which is both far broader and also far more modest. Far broader, because we will not have the Church in mind or the task of recruiting new members, as if we were the club secretary; but our eyes will be on the whole changing population of the place, seeking

slowly to discover what manner of community God would make of it. But also far more modest, because we do not have a ready-made answer to that search and will only find an answer in what Vincent Donovan calls 'the sacred arena of people's lives'.

Thousands are now familiar with *Christianity Rediscovered* in which in 1978 that Catholic missionary from America described his own unique mission among the Masai of Tanzania. What he says in that book, however, is just as valid for our own hoped-for encounter with the paganism of the western world. In his preface to the second edition, Donovan quotes an American student speaking of the mission to his contemporaries:

Do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, beautiful as that place might seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have ever been before.

Letting the Kingdom, God's will and purpose for the community and the world, dictate the agenda rather than the Church, God's missionary agent, can be illustrated in two simple examples. A parish priest, recently appointed to an inner city church in terminal decline, set about using the ugly barn-like space as a multi-purpose centre and invited as many of the entire population as wanted to respond to take part in a celebration of the varied life of the community.

They planned it and carried it through and the building took on a significance for them

it had not enjoyed for years. I myself, on the other hand, learned shamefully late in my ministry (through misinterpreting a young couple's invitation to the 'Christening' of their firstborn and failing to go on after the service to join the extended family at the cake and champagne) that the birth of their own child, the death of a close relative or the discovery of the depths of sexual love can, even for the most secularised, be a numinous experience demanding ritual recognition.

If we will recognise that 'christenings', marriages and funerals are properly *their* celebration of mystery we may earn the right to share with them and, better still, *discover* with them, the meanings that Christianity might add.

With those two examples we have moved into the sphere of mission proper which should always be understood as the mission of the Son or of the Holy Spirit. 'As the Father, the will to love, sent me, so I am sending you.' There is a 'going forth' within God to that which is not God. So in anything that deserves to be called mission there has to be a being sent and a going from 'here' to 'elsewhere'.

It need not be a geographical elsewhere. It will very likely be a cultural elsewhere to people with a different background, to strangers. A Church entirely absorbed in talking to itself about things nobody understands except those already gathered in is not engaged in mission. Is that why Jesus urged his followers, if they gave a party, not to invite only familiar friends?

Mission starts with one crucial step, out of your own shoes and into the shoes of the person you are meeting. Or even more

significantly, out of your ears into those of the one who is listening to you so that you hear the tones of your voice and the effect it is having upon the other person.

This is where the mission of the Holy Spirit begins to merge with the mission of the Son, as it did with Jesus, bringing about that empathy, that knowledge from within the other which makes us at home and at one with all sorts.

Then we shall begin to see aright that human community around us which is the object of God's self-giving. They have not rejected religion; most have never grasped it. Yet they have had insights and dreams and moments of revelation that would amaze us if ever they found words to share them. We should never trample on those unguessed secret intimations of spiritual reality with heavy dogmatic boots, for our mission, and the Church's job, is to reach and cherish the frail, damaged capacity for God and for self-giving love that is hidden within them and us. In that way we may move, as Jesus did, from our own distinctive spiritual ground on to what is common spiritual ground, however limited that may seem to be, for that is the good soil in which the seed takes root.

The author, now retired in Oxford, was previously Bishop of Winchester, Chairman of the Doctrine Commission, and before that General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society. He is well known, too, for his books The Go-Between God, Enough is Enough, and The Christlike God, which was reviewed in the last Franciscan. He has long been a friend of SSF.



Come, Holy Spirit, prepare us to enter the hut of others.

A mission prayer from Africa

Catholic Evangelicalism the mission of SSF

by Stephen Platten

Earlier this year, Pope John Paul II called together religious leaders for prayers for peace for Europe, and particularly for the war torn lands of Yugoslavia. Invited to those prayers were Christian church leaders from well beyond the bounds of the Roman Catholic Church.

Religious leaders of other faiths were invited too: forty Muslim leaders from thirteen European nations attended alongside a number of Jewish Rabbis. Central to the prayer vigil were two dramatic gestures. Pottery lamps, after the manner of first century Palestine, were given to the Christian participants, who handed them over to young people from Bosnia, Serbia, Slovenia and Croatia; those young people took the lamps to their homelands as a sign of peace, a sign of Christ's light in a dark world.

Later in the worship, the Pope placed incense onto a glowing coal brazier; a turret of smoke curled its way up into the vast roof of the basilica in which we all stood. It was a sign of the mingling of human hopes for peace with a belief in the divine power which can effect change in our world.

Two of the fundamental elements within this vigil will remain unforgettable to those who participated. They were the location and the symbolism. Geneva, Strasbourg, Brussels or Rome all might have been chosen as a place to gather for prayer. Each has resonances for peace and unity in Europe. But the Pope chose Assisi.

He chose Assisi presumably since it was the birthplace of Francis, and it was Francis who had worked for peace between Christians and Muslims during the time of the Crusades. It was Francis, too, who had worked to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

But the symbolism during that vigil was also so powerful because Francis had often been effective in his own ministry through symbolic acts. Kneeling before a cross, he had heard the call of Christ; rebuilding the church of San Damiano, he prefigured the rebuilding of God's Church on earth; wearing a humble tunic, he spoke of a commitment to living the gospel literally. So the Pope did not choose Assisi for his dramatic gesture purely by chance.

The prayers for peace in Assisi were not merely an act of worship, they were a symbolic gesture of mission. For mission is not simply preaching the word of God. It is touching the hearts of our fellow women and men so that they might be converted, and converted not once only, but daily and

even hour by hour, minute by minute through their lives. This may be one of the reasons why Franciscans, of all three Orders, have sometimes been known in the past as Catholic Evangelicals.

Rooted in community and the Eucharist, they have always looked outwards to God's world. They have felt an apostolic commission, they have known that they are sent by God into the dark places of the world, sent to live a life of reconciliation, sent to live this life in community.

From the beginning, then, Francis knew that he and his followers had been sent to the dark places of the world. Francis' own conviction that he must follow literally the example of Christ himself in living a life of poverty is the foundation of this, and a challenge to all of us in SSF. The simplicity

similar ministry. In many parts of Africa lay people and priests have offered the greater part of their lives. For others the same thing has been true in the poor parts of our own cities. Many of us, as Tertiaries, still feel indicted that we have offered too little, and so we too still struggle to follow Francis in the world.

Our competitive and enterprise-based society presents increasing challenges to the Third Order to identify its mission. Casualties are increasing in a society where the welfare state is less visible now than it has been since the Second World War. The shape of the welfare state is changing and sometimes that means, sadly, that the dark places of our world are more easily seen now than before.

Those dark places include the subways of



The Pope placed incense onto a glowing coal brazier.

of the lifestyle of Francis and his followers, and the call to gospel poverty, were to mirror the conditions to those to whom they had been sent.

It is because of this that in these past ten years the First Order brothers and sisters have consciously moved the focus of their work into the less privileged parts of our country and of our world. It has been a new witness to an old truth.

The wayfarers of Hilfield and Alnmouth knew and know of a similar love and commitment. The outcasts and broken of society have always been given a place in the friaries of SSF across the world. It is a ministry we dare not forsake, even as the Society moves to smaller and humbler houses. Tertiaries, too, have offered a

London's Underground scattered with the poor and homeless, the streets of our cities which remain unfriendly to the disorientated patients released into the community from psychiatric hospitals, and the schoolchildren who are born into underprivileged circumstances and for whom there is little hope. Tertiaries, sisters and brothers need not search far before they find the dark places of God's world. This remains a great challenge to the mission of SSF.

Then, as the Pope's Assisi vigil reminded us, Francis called us to be reconcilers. Reconciliation lies at the very heart of the Christian gospel and the Christian mission. 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself'. The gospel issued from Christ's

self-giving which was the means of reconciliation for all time.

In Europe there is more hope but also more fear than at any moment since the Second World War. In Europe, too, there is more distrust and paranoia between the churches than at any time since the Reformation. Orthodox and Protestants fear Catholic triumphalism. Catholics fear a falling away from the gospel and an advance in materialism. Orthodox fear Protestant proselytising sects. And yet the possibility of a more united Europe lies before us now perhaps more realistically than at any time in history. What would Francis have us say and do?

The movement that Francis began soon became universal. Friars arrived in this country even before the death of Francis. Franciscan ideals have infected so much both within and outside the Church. So peace and justice, the spiritual and moral heart for Europe often spoken of by Jacques Delors and others, reconciliation between different faiths, all owe much to the culture nurtured by the Franciscans of the First, Second and Third Orders throughout Europe over the centuries. The Community of S. Egidio, working with the poor in Rome, and working also with Anglicans for peace in Mozambique, owes much of its vision to Francis.

All these pointers suggest that perhaps the Society of S. Francis, and particularly the Third Order, is being challenged to a sharper international self-awareness. Perhaps Tertiaries too need to ask how they can kindle in others a strong altruism that goes beyond the shores of these Atlantic isles. The First Order has shown us the way, but even there it is too easy for people in this country to be jealous for themselves. Is the First Order in the European Province being called to offer some of its rare and overstretched resources to help nurture the Franciscan life elsewhere in our world?

And finally, what of community? Like reconciliation and working in the dark places of our world community is not a Franciscan privilege alone. But within the Church's wider mission Franciscans offer a model of community that is unique in its flavour and in its vitality. It preserves a balance between silent prayer and enthusiastic activity. Christians have always known that there certainly is such a thing as society, whatever politicians may say. For we know that we are redeemed as the 'people of God' and not as isolated souls in a desert of a world.

The Society of S. Francis has thrived on its individuals, in all three Orders. Such individuals have offered a very great deal to the mission of God's Church. The evangelical power exhibited by sisters and brothers in SSF over the years has become legendary and all too rare within catholic Anglicanism. But there is always the danger that too much individualism means too much isolation.

Contemporary Western culture nurtures individualism, and Franciscans are not

immune to such an influence. Tertiaries can too easily rest happily in simply living out a solitary rule of life, where meetings, chapters, and even retreats, are unwarranted and unwelcome intrusions into the personal life of prayer. But Tertiaries are unique in the religious life as living under vows, as part of a community. They cannot escape their corporate vocation. Brothers and sisters, too, do not escape the trends of society. Large houses have their problems, but small houses can easily fragment, leaving individuals living almost solitary lives. Mission in community is part of the Franciscan vocation, part of our mission, part of what we offer to God's Church and to his world.

Many have already tired of the too oft-repeated references to the Decade of Evangelism in our churches. Undeniably it is difficult to sustain any initiative for ten years. But the priority to which it points remains essential for all of us. Franciscans

can offer their own emphases and gifts within this essential mission; it may be an offering which touches the hearts of those who are unaffected or even alienated by other forms of mission and evangelism.

That turret of curling incense in the upper basilica in Assisi, those flickering points of light from the pottery lamps and, of course, the gathering of so many people, not only Christians, in community in Assisi this January remind us of that strand of catholic evangelicalism which remains unique to Francis and his followers. It is a mission marked by reconciliation, by community, and by commitment to the darkest places of God's world. The Church still needs Francis - how shall we offer his vision to an ever darkening world?

Stephen Platten is the Minister Provincial of the Third Order in this Province. He is currently the Archbishop of Canterbury's Advisor on Ecumenical Affairs.

David

(low IQ, ?schizophrenic)

Young David
Small and chubby
Only twenty,
Pale and far away
As the Arctic,
Smiles with broken teeth
Black and white,
Laughs with or without the joke,
Dragging his thoughts along.

★ ★ ✱

He stands hesitantly, watching,
Awkward as a child asking for sweets -
'Can I have a cigarette please?'
Straight to his chair
Legs cross/ uncross
Staring vacantly back.

★ ★ ✱

Talks of Elvis
And the 'Mr Universe'
He keeps in his locker
Along with his dreams.
Day and night
Lost in space
With only a cigarette
Staring at heaven.

★ ★ ✱

Sometimes he sings,
Broken and plaintive,
Like a bird in a cage.

Clifford Vodden

Edinburgh's Little Portion

for this edition we asked the brothers in Edinburgh to tell us about their lives and work

The chapel of the Portiuncula - the Little Portion - Edinburgh has something in common with its namesake in Assisi: it also is contained within another building. But whereas the original is within the Basilica of S. Mary of the Angels, the Scottish version is within an Edinburgh tenement.

Lothian Road is one of the busiest streets in Edinburgh and is the centre of its night life. There are three theatres, two cinemas and a concert hall within five minutes walk from the friary, and the restaurants are open till 4 am - certainly the right location for an urban ministry! We do, however, get a taste of the country as well for our window boxes are now in full bloom and we are only five minutes away from the beautiful Princes Street Gardens.

The brothers moved to their first floor flat above a Chinese restaurant about 8 years ago when they left S. David's Church in Pilton. The flat is owned by the Council of West End Churches (CWEC), a group of two Presbyterian and one Episcopalian Churches, and leased to us rent free. The three of us, William Henry, Robbie Asaph and David Francis, are involved to a greater or lesser extent in all three churches.

Our main house ministry is with the homeless and needy in the local area. From 9 - 10 am each weekday morning we have an open house when about ten or fifteen men and some women, who are either homeless or living in hostels, come into the

kitchen for tea and sandwiches. We also give to this group and to those who call at the door throughout the day, tins of food that have been collected and given to us by local churches. Help and support is also given to people with mental health problems, like the young man with schizophrenia who finds it difficult to budget: he gives us his sickness benefit and we give him a daily allowance.

As in most cities, there is an increasing number of homeless people in Edinburgh, a large percentage of whom have mental health problems and who are victims of the Care in the Community policy of moving people out of psychiatric hospitals to where, even if there is any sense of community, it is unwilling to care for those who do not fit in.

Groups and individuals also join us occasionally in the chapel for the Offices, and regularly for our Wednesday evening Eucharist which is followed by a supper of soup and bread and cheese. As none of us are priests we have a rota of local priests who celebrate for us - this helps to deepen our links with local parishes. On the first Wednesday of each month local members of the Third Order come to the Eucharist and supper and then have a meeting together.

Most of our ministry takes place outside the Friary. Br Bill (William Henry), the Brother-in-Charge, works as chaplain to a drop in centre run by the Church of Scotland in the West End, part time in a Christian bookshop, is on the management committee of The Ark, a cafe providing cheap breakfasts for the homeless, and is on



The window box and Lothian Road seen from the Friary chapel

the ministry team of S. Martin's Church.

Br Robbie is part time chaplain at the Royal Infirmary and on the staff of S. John's Church, as well as running a Beaver (Junior Cub Scout) Group, and helping with the Boys' Brigade.

Br David Francis, the only genuine Scot in the house, is Anglican chaplain at Edinburgh prison, the Friary housekeeper, and is kept busy preaching in local churches as well as leading quiet days and retreats. He hopes to start the new Scottish Episcopal Church Ministerial Training Course in September.

Br Basil, although attached to the Alnmouth Friary, lives in Edinburgh where he is director of the Rock Trust, the charity he founded to provide supported accommodation for homeless teenagers, and is a fairly frequent visitor to the Friary.

Now that there are only three of us in the flat we have a spare bedroom which is well used by brothers and sisters and other friends - we are especially popular during the Edinburgh Festival! Although we have good contacts with the brothers in Glasgow and Alnmouth, and despite David Francis' ability to turn up at most SSF gatherings, we can still feel a bit out on a limb and it is good to have visitors.

After a few unsettled years when there was quite a large turnover of brothers and a lot of uncertainty about the future of the flat, having to renew the lease every two years, we are now in a period of greater stability. Bill has been here 3 years, David for 2 years, and Robbie for 1 year, and there are no plans afoot for any of us to move. Our relationship with CWEC, which has been strained in the past mainly due to



Brother Robbie Asaph (standing left), Brother William Henry (seated), and Brother David Francis (in apron) and friends in the Friary kitchen

differing expectations of our role as friars, is now much better and we have had the lease extended for 5 years.

As a community and as individuals, we are becoming better known in the Diocese and beyond, although we see our main task to be an example of Christian community, living alongside others and unobtrusively bringing something of the love of Christ to those around us, rather than having a high profile ministry.

We are greatly supported by Richard Holloway, the Bishop of Edinburgh and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church. We were delighted to have Bishop Richard celebrate our Francistide mass which was held in S. Cuthbert's Presbyterian Church at the invitation of the Minister, the Revd Tom Cuthill, who is a great friend of SSF. Around 70 friends from Edinburgh and Glasgow joined us for that evening.

Being only 3 brothers, each different in personality and temperament, with most of our individual ministry outside the Friary, it could be easy for it to become a group of bedsits. But we realise that all our varied and important ministries outside will only succeed if we are first and foremost a community of brothers that prays together. Although we often fail, we strive to make the daily Offices and our time of quiet prayer the heart of our life, out of which the rest of our work flows.

Subscriptions for 1993

(one copy, three issues a year)

U.K., Europe & Surface Mail to all countries £3.00

Air Mail outside Europe £4.50

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Dorchester, Dorset DT2 7BE.

Please make cheques payable to The
Society of Saint Francis.

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The challenge of honesty

After a lifetime's experience of living in community, Br Leo Anthony is an astute observer of, and commentator on, the religious life. However, initially, he is shy and self-effacing, so few have the opportunity to realise this depth. For the past two years he has been 'on loan' to the European Province. Shortly before he returned to his home Province of Australia and New Zealand therefore, Br Alistair and Peta Dunstan, for a long time a friend of the Cambridge brothers, interviewed him both about his time living with us in Plaistow, and also for his more general reflections on contemporary religious life. The following is an edited version of their conversation.



the Church. It shows the human face of the Church, which was Francis' desire.

Honesty

You talk about 'working on problems', what does this mean if it is not just a cliché?

Honesty, this is the real challenge, and the humility is to accept it. Without honesty one cannot grapple with problems, and therefore the community will have nothing to say to the Church and the world.

And how far have we got with our honesty? Take poverty, for example.

There can be no compromise here. Being dependent on each other is the witness. Brothers are not poor: usually they are middle-class, secure, money-conscious. But that is not wrong provided there is no reluctance to lend or share with the needy.

There is a danger of being patronising, but the choice is between trying to do something or doing nothing. It is the striving then that is important; one can achieve things despite oneself. Sharing with other brothers is also crucial. We are forever having conferences and these are important, not because of any navel-gazing that happens, but because it is important for us to spend time together as a group. Brothers have to laugh and cry together.

Participation

But is it realistic to expect that brothers and sisters have all their social needs met within such a model of community?

Everything in a community cannot be collective. This is hard in a small Province but without a personal side brothers and sisters will become disillusioned with the life. The individual needs to feel good about what he is doing, because each brother needs the Gospel to come alive for him as well as for those he serves. One's own needs can be used to serve others.

Indeed, but how honest are we in relationships with those outside the community?

There is pressure to live out what others want us to be. There is a problem with the 'ideal'. Sometimes I think that the line in

Sharing

I'd like to begin by asking you, Leo, how worthwhile do you think our ministry is in the East End of London?

Well, I found again, in Plaistow, what had originally prompted me to join SSF - compassion for the vulnerable in society being shown in action rather than talking theology. People can be poor in many ways, not just materially. By sharing time and resources with them, one can witness to Christ and the way of S. Francis. By accepting warts and all, both one's brothers and sisters and the poor, the Gospel is brought alive, because working out the Gospel is a process rather than an attainable goal. The resulting experience is then offered to the Church.

Outside of community one has the option of turning away from the difficulties of relating, but to stay in community one has to work at them. Seeing a community working on problems, both personal and social, often painfully, is a sign of hope for

the Principles which says 'There is no place in the community for idle members' should read, 'There is no place in the community for the ideal member'. Showing human weakness helps brothers and sisters relate to the unchurched. It is a way of guarding against being patronising. The world needs the 'fool' to help people accept their own mistakes. But outsiders are important so as to give a balanced perspective.

I remember coming out of a Chapter meeting where there had been an unholy row, and meeting a non-Christian visitor to the friary. The visitor said that she was going through an awful time personally, but she had found here 'Christ's peace' - this at the very time the row was going on elsewhere in the friary! When one is living a life, it is not always easy to see the effect one can have on others.

Authority

How honest are we about obedience?

In the last twenty years, obedience to a brother-in charge only comes if the power is given to him by the other brothers. The Constitution gives Guardians little power. This enables the Rule to live. But brothers can use the Guardian as an excuse, quoting him as having made some decision which he has in fact not made. Too many give others authority when it suits, but rebel when it does not. This leads to manipulating those in authority, making them punch-bags and fall-guys.

Finally, what memories will you take back with you?

Well, to be honest, I recognise that my time here has, perhaps, helped heal me a little bit more. And the suffering that's part of any healing prepares you for a new phase in your ministry, and that ministry should then be fruitful - that's very Franciscan!

I'm a person who believes in 'roots', and I suppose coming to England has been for me a return to my roots. Walking about Hilfield, visiting the cemetery there, finding the spirit that drove Douglas and Algy to do what they did. This enabled me to go back to my roots and look again at myself. I found that liberating and enriching. And living in Plaistow, in a house that has had the same purpose for the past 100 years gave me a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose.

So I think I'll take back that sense of purpose - to make the Gospel come alive again, and maybe to be able to do that differently this time; maybe with a bit more compassion and understanding, not just for other people, but also for my brothers. Maybe to learn a bit of humility.

And also I'll take back the knowledge and joy that what I've done here has been appreciated, and that people love me for being Leo. And I give thanks to God for that.

To the ends of the earth

by Sister Pat



'You will be my witnesses,' Jesus said to his apostles, 'not only in Judea but to the ends of the earth'. Where, then, are the ends of the earth for us who are seeking to be his witnesses now?

How do we share the good news of Jesus, news of the coming of the reign of God, with the people of our time? How do we, as God's people, live in a way which is consistent with what we say we believe, in a way that speaks of justice, of love, of good news for the poor?

I suspect that those and similar questions resonate with anyone who is trying to live out the Gospel and communicate it in ways that connect with the reality of people's lives. It is from the attempt of the church in Latin America to find and live contemporary answers to such questions that the Basic Ecclesial Communities have grown. It's not an attempt to found a new church, but an expression of church, the community of God, focused not on drawing people in to ensure its own survival, but on going out, being with people in their needs and concerns and everyday lives.

For a number of years now, a team from Latin America, Jose Marins, Carolee Chanona and Teolide Trevisan, have come to this country to run workshops on the experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities. Such a workshop was held this June, at Emmaus House, Bristol where nineteen of us, from differing backgrounds and different parts of Britain, gathered to share experiences, hopes, dreams and to learn.

All the time the underlying question is: What does it mean for us, now, to be church, to be, together, the people of God? That question is explored in the light of the understanding of God that Jesus gives us, and in the light of the concrete situations in which we variously find ourselves. That may mean letting go of some of our historical and culturally determined expressions of church which no longer speak of God to the people of our time.

It also means being aware of, and open to, the situation in which we live, repeatedly

asking why things are the way they are and questioning it in the light of the Gospel. We were reminded that to speak of God as 'Abba', 'Father', and ourselves as each others' brothers and sisters is not just a theological statement, but one that has political and social implications.

Much of the learning of the workshop is done through sharing stories, our own stories, the stories and experience of the Basic Ecclesial Communities in Latin America, the stories of the early Christian communities. This stops it becoming an abstract academic exercise and means that the experience of any given workshop will be different, depending on the stories and life experience that participants bring with them. It also means that it is difficult fully to convey the experience in an article like this.

Two moments, out of many, stand out in my mind. One was having, in our groups, shared with each other something of the situations from which we came, we were asked to share reflections on John 1:35-51. 'Nazareth, can anything good come from Nazareth?' struck us forcibly in the light of the experience of those in the group from Newcastle. The second is of one morning's worship when an outline map of Britain was placed on the floor and we were invited to pray by drawing in the people, places and situations with which we were concerned.

The Marins team will be coming to Britain again next year, when it is hoped to hold workshops in the South-West, South Wales, Newcastle and Edinburgh. If you are interested in finding out more, Br Peter at Hilfield, or Sr Pat at Compton Durville, will be pleased to answer questions and give more details.

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International Standard Serial No. ISSN 0532/579X.

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Published by the First Order European Provinces of the Society of S. Francis, a religious order in the Anglican Communion. The Society of S. Francis is committed to follow Christ in the way of S. Francis of Assisi, in humility, love and joy.

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Community Routes

◆◆ Alnmouth

Following a very critical review of our commitment as the First Order in the North-East, the Brothers' Provincial Chapter approved proposals to concentrate the ministry at Alnmouth Friary in 1994. The relatively small group of brothers at Alnmouth at present are to be commended for their faithful maintaining of the life and for providing a consistent welcome to its guests - even though the 1993 programme had to be cut down.

We may expect something of a lull in their commitments as the brothers make the opportunity to take stock, appraise their aims and ministry, and make a few necessary improvements to the House in readiness for the challenges of 1994.

Meanwhile, we wish Br Alan well as he commences training for ordination with NEOC at Alnmouth.

◆◆ Religious in history

Two of our brothers have recently contributed to celebrations commemorating historic connections with the religious life.

Br James Anthony helped provide a contemporary religious dimension when he led prayers at Bridgnorth to open the remains of a 13th century Franciscan Friary which has become Shropshire's latest tourist attraction. The site was only accidentally discovered in 1989 when work began on a new housing development in the town. Further excavations by Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit revealed substantial remains which, in places, are up to three metres high. Fortunately, the local District Council has been able to secure an arrangement which allows the remains to be preserved and open to the public.

Meanwhile, after conducting a pre-



Alnmouth Friary from the garden

mission visit to Jordanstown in Belfast and leading a clergy conference in Donegal, Br Bernard took part in a dramatised commemoration of 1550 years of the Clogher Diocese. This was held, early in June, on the island of Inishmacsaint in Lower Lough Erne, which S. Columba had visited before he left Ireland for Iona. The celebration began with a long-boat, rowed by 'Celtic monks', bringing the Bishop, Chapter and preacher to the island where a crowd of 2000 people had gathered. Massed choirs and a full brass band led an enthusiastic service. Br Bernard tells us, 'I preached my heart out!...and returned to England celebrating both Celtic missionary monasticism and the warm faith of the people of Northern Ireland.'

◆◆ Change of date

There was to have been a central London meeting for friends and members of the First and Third Orders at Francistide this year. However, the meeting is now scheduled for 1994 on Saturday September

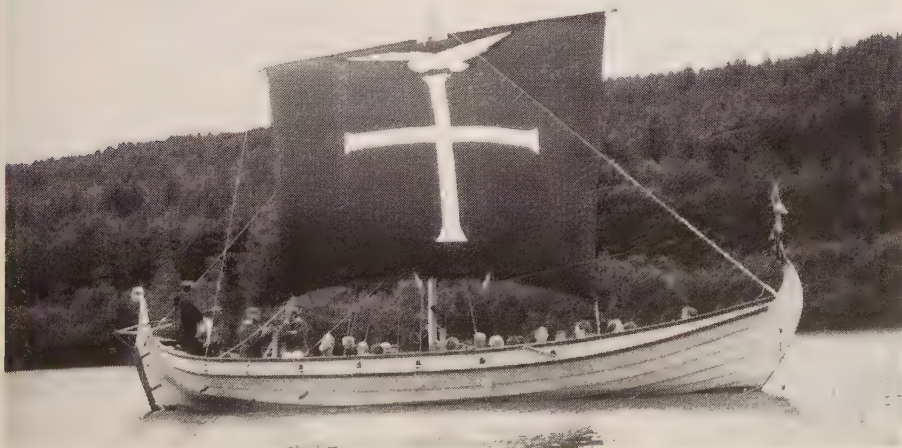
17, from 12 noon to 5pm, at Partnership House, Waterloo Road. Watch this space for more details.

◆◆ Retirement ministry

Several people have made enquiries about our oldest brother in this Province, Br David. Br Amos, the Guardian of Glasshampton Monastery, to which David is attached, writes about his new ministry:

'Br David had begun to dread the cold winters at Glasshampton. His own room was warm but the corridor outside, a hundred yards long and sixteen feet high, was often at 3 degrees Centigrade! And so it was with relief that he learnt that he could spend the coldest months in a home in Stourport, and return to Glasshampton when the weather was warmer. At the last minute, however, it was discovered that all the rooms were taken, and his social worker, looking further afield, found a place in a brand new home for the elderly at Froome Bank on the edge of Bromyard.

'David was delighted with it from the word "go". It is small and cosy, and his room has a beautiful view over a valley and fields. The staff quickly discovered what a treasure David would be to the life of the place, and as soon as a permanent place became available offered it to him. So there he now is, as bright and perky as ever, though perhaps not quite so mobile, despite working hard at his physiotherapy. We visit about twice a week and sometimes take David on to visit Br Wilfrid in Hereford. Mary Clare, David's niece, also visits regularly. It seems to be the right place for David whom you will find in his chair by the front window, opposite Gertie, Office Book by his side.'



The long boat sailing to the island

◆◆ New Bishop Protector

You may have noticed in the May 1993 prayer list that the Australia/New Zealand Province was without a Bishop Protector. Ken Mason, Bishop of the Northern Territory of Australia has, in fact, retired, both as Protector of the ANZ Province, after 15 years, and as Protector General for the last 5 years. His replacement as Bishop Protector is Richard Appleby, the new Bishop of the Northern Territory, whose association with SSF dates back to his time as Assistant Bishop of Newcastle.

◆◆ And a new friary

Towards the end of this year the brothers in Australia are to return to Brisbane to open a new friary. Unlike their previous house near Brisbane, this venture will be sited within the city suburbs: S. Philips Thompson Estate. Br Leo Anthony will be the first Guardian, alongside Brs William, Alan Barnabas, Donald Campbell and one other, as yet unnamed!

◆◆ Korean Franciscans

Br Brian, Minister General of the First Order brothers, writes:

For many years the Anglican Church in Korea has wanted a religious community of men. No established community in other countries has been able to accept invitations to live and work there. So what is happening now?

The initiative is coming from Korea itself. The Society of the Holy Cross, a lively religious community of Korean women, under the leadership of Mother Catherine, is encouraging a small group of four young men to try the religious life in a house belonging to the sisters.

One of the men has spent six months with SSF at Stroud in Australia and another, who may join them later, has spent a longer time in our friary in New Zealand. In May this year I was able to spend two weeks in Seoul helping them to begin their life together.

Eventually they would like to be part of the First Order of SSF. They are living by the First Order Principles and Rule of Life which has been translated into Korean. Mother Catherine spends one day a week with them, and I will visit them on my travels. If any other members of SSF can visit them, they will be very welcome. Later on it may be possible for one or two to spend time in one of our Franciscan friaries in another country. But for the moment they must settle down as a community in their own country and their own culture.

On the Feast of the Ascension at the sung Eucharist in the sisters' convent chapel, at which the Primate, Bishop Simon Kim of



The Korean Brothers with Brian SSF in front of the house in Incheon

Seoul, presided, the four men were made postulants. Their baptismal names are Augustine, Francis, Lawrence and Paul. For the time being they are calling themselves the Brothers of S. Francis in Korea.

This is a new experiment in planting the Franciscan religious life in the culture to which people belong. Please pray for this very young plant. Pray for the sisters of the Society of the Holy Cross and for the Anglican Church of Korea - the newest Province in the Anglican Communion.

◆◆ Democratic choice

The brothers in the small, but exceedingly democratic, American Province report the results of their recent elections.

Br Justus Richard has been chosen as the new Minister Provincial, Brs Derek and Antonio the new Guardians of, respectively, S. Elizabeth's Brooklyn and San Damiano, San Francisco, and Br Jason Robert has been re-elected the Guardian of Little Portion, Mount Sinai.

◆◆ Br Michael's memoirs

Br Michael has completed a book of memoirs, entitled 'For the Time Being', which is to be published this October by Fowler Wright Books.

Next year is the 100th anniversary of the re-emergence of Franciscan Orders in the Church of England. Br Michael has lived in the Society of Saint Francis for more than half that time and shared in its growth, from a handful of men in Dorset to a still-growing Religious Order.

Invalided out of the Army in the middle of the Second World War at the age of 23, he was recruited to SSF by Denis in Cambridge. Sent to the friary in Dorset, he found it no rural retreat and rapidly became involved with its remarkable, devout, yet eccentric founders, particularly Algy whose secretary he became. Michael's memoirs give a vivid impression of the development of an Anglican Order, including travelling, preaching, pastoral care and the life of prayer. During twelve years in Cambridge he was involved with the Student Christian



The Bishop Protector, Brother Hugh, with his sister Sussanna and niece Rachel, with Sister Nan and Brother Damian, at Hugh's Life Profession on June 4th at Hilfield

Movement and became an itinerant preacher on their behalf, so the story includes an account of his visits to many countries, and the people he met on the way. He became Bishop of S. Germans in Cornwall and after that returned to Cambridge in 1985.

The book began when he was asked for recollections of 'life with Algy', but it grew into memoirs of many people in many places, including some detail of the growth of the Society itself, of which he ceased to be Minister General in 1991.

◆◆ Clare Heath RIP

It was through Clare Heath's generosity and vision that CSF established a presence in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire in 1974. She died in March, aged 99 years. She had been a parish worker in East London for many years before retiring to the Potteries in 1947; there she purchased and ran a home for elderly women until 1965 when part of the property was sold. The remaining, Greystones, had outbuildings which she had converted into self-contained accommodation for herself, as well as space for parish meetings. The extensive grounds provided the venue for S. Andrew's parish Missionary Summer Sale for many years.

It had long been Clare's hope that a religious community would occupy her house after her death, until the thought occurred that she might not need to wait until then! Further adaptations were made to the buildings before the sisters moved in and an extension was built later on. Clare herself remarked, 'My prayers of many years were answered; my highest hopes fulfilled.' May she rest in peace.

◆◆ Round-up

Jennie and **Freda** made their First Professions at Compton Durville on August 8 and 30, respectively...**Freda** is transferring to the American Province and goes to San Francisco in September...**Pat** has been appointed Assistant Novice Guardian and moved to Compton Durville from Brixton in August...**Susan Frances** moved back to Compton Durville in August...**Christine James** moves from Compton Durville to Brixton in October...**Kate** moves from Newcastle-under-Lyme to Compton Durville in October...**Helen** has withdrawn from the noviciate...**Edmund** has moved from Cambridge to Belfast...**Tristram** from Paddington to Hilfield...and **Victor** from Liverpool to Birmingham...**Peter Douglas**

has completed his 3 years service as a naval chaplain and has now returned to Alnmouth...**Luke** left Alnmouth for Hilfield and begins training for the ordained ministry at S. Stephen's House, Oxford this autumn...**James** has gone on leave of absence...Two new brothers were clothed at Hilfield on June 10, taking the names **Jason Antony** and **Michael Carey**...**Jason Antony** is now living in Liverpool with his fellow novices **Wayne**, and **Simeon Christopher**...**Michael Carey** has moved to Glasshampton with **Kentigern John**, they will shortly be joined there by **Brian Edward** and **Matthew**...**Seraphim** has moved to Plaistow...**Graeme James**, **Nolan Tobias** and **David Thomas** have withdrawn from the noviciate...**Alan John** is on leave of absence...**Clifton Henry** and **Moses Lonsdale** from the Pacific Islands Province



Helen Julian making her Life Profession on 17th July at St Matthews Church, Brixton

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54 Old Post Road, Box 389, Mt. Sinai, NY 11766.

(516 473-9434)

S. Elizabeth's Friary, 1474 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11207, U.S.A. (718 455-5963)

San Damiano, 573 Dolores Street, San Francisco, CA

94110, U.S.A. (415 861-1372)

S. Francis House, 3743 Army Street, San Francisco, CA 94110, U.S.A. (415 824-0288)

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Douglas House, P.O. Box 3411, Lae, Morobe Province, Papua New Guinea.

Anglican Church, Nambaiyufa, Movi, via Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province, Papua New Guinea.

Patterson House, P.O. Box 519, Honiara, Solomon Islands. (Honiara 22386)

The Friary, P.O. Box 7, Auki, Malaita Province, Solomon Islands.

La Verna Friary, Hautambu, P.O. Box 519, Honiara, Solomon Islands.

San Damiano Friary, Diocese of Hanuato'o, Kira Kira, Makira Ulawa Province, Solomon Islands.

Reading about mission

by Brother Bernard

A review of some recent books about mission

A foundational book for me on mission questions has been **Transforming Mission** by **David Bosch** (Orbis, 1991, 587p, £14.95). Detailed, comprehensive, readable, it searches for today's mission in the light of the Church's story. What was the Church's mission after Constantine, in the time before the barbarian invasions, for instance? Or at the Reformation and Counter-Reformation? And what difference has the way of looking at things since the Enlightenment of the last few centuries made to our understanding of mission?

Books and articles from the whole range of contemporary Christian writers are described, carefully examined and annotated. The last third of the book is given to our contemporary situations. The section headings illustrate the range: church with others, *Missio Dei*, mediating salvation, quest for justice, evangelism, contextualisation, liberation, inculturation, common witness, ministry by the whole people of God, witness to people of other living faiths, theology, action in hope. Thoroughness, comprehensiveness, without superficiality makes this book a remarkable achievement; the subsequent death of its author (in a road accident in South Africa, his native land) is a huge loss.

Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali also brings a wide perspective. Born in Pakistan, he is General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society and a theologian. His book, **From Everywhere to Everywhere** (Collins-

Flame, 1991, 269p, £6.95), speaks of mission under these headings: presence, identification, dialogue, action, evangelism, unity, the congregation and the community. All are seen under the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20). The West used to see itself as 'the sending Church'; the churches of Africa and Asia and South America are the fast-growing churches today; the West needs evangelising.

Our context in Britain and Europe generally is examined in eight essays edited by **Hugh Montefiore** under the title **The Gospel and Contemporary Culture** (Mowbrays, 1992, 182p, £9.99). Groups had worked on issues like economics, the arts, the new science, attempting to see them in the light of Jesus Christ. The Swanwick Conference in July 1992 worked on them further and we await the full report. Behind this initiative is the seminal work of Bishop Lesslie Newbigin who calls for the Gospel to be brought out of the 'private values' world to which our culture would confine it, into the sphere of 'public truth'. At very least we have to rediscover how to put the Christian understanding understandably within the pluriformity of our times.

The gap between how most people look at life and the life and message of the Church is vividly described by **Jack Burton**, a Methodist Minister who drives a bus in Norwich and most of whose life is spent on the non-Church side of the gap.

His small book, **The Gap** (SPCK-Triangle, 1991, 132p, £4.99) is a good read.

It is against this background that the many books on evangelism need to be appraised. **Michael Marshall's The Gospel Connection** (DLT, 1991, 209p, £9.95), and his subsequent book (which I haven't yet read) are among the best of them. His singleminded concern for evangelism, of bringing congregations to the 'apostolic point' so that, renewed in the Spirit, they share their faith, accords with some of our evangelistic work, past and present. He calls for a recovery of 'evangelistic nerve'.

John Finney's research on how adults come to faith, **Finding Faith Today** (British and Foreign Bible Society, 1992, 115p, £6.95), well illustrates that most come to faith because of other people we admire or love; any kind of campaign evangelism must recognise this. **Canon Peter Ball's The Adult way to Faith** (Mowbray, 1992, 104p, £6.99) uses this insight, as does the whole catechetical programme of the Roman Catholic Church (RCIA), of which his books are an adaptation for Anglicans.

The **Archbishop of Canterbury** is active in promoting evangelistic and church growth projects. He promotes not only action, but also reflection. His book, with a wide range of contributors, is due out in September. Edited by **David Gillett** and **Michael Scott-Joynt**, it is entitled **Sharing a Vision** (DLT, Sept 1993, about £9.99).

Reviews

Gavin White, The Mother Church Your Mother Never Told You Of, SCM, £7.95.

'One, Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Scruffy,' is Gavin White's conclusion about the early Church, 'Sometimes very scruffy. But still glorious.' If Anthony Trollope had written on Patristics, this is the book he would have come up with. Even in the second century, the Church had its share of Rev'd Slopes. White presents a vision of the early Church which neither idealises the Christians of the first four centuries, nor dismisses their struggles to live out the Gospel.

The book is a series of seventeen essays, each easily read at a sitting and dealing with a distinct topic such as worship or persecution. White writes with a light touch and a humour that brings a freshness even to the most complex discussions. But, for all their wit, the essays give an authoritative

and contemporary perspective - I particularly enjoyed the clear exposition of grace and evangelism. The book is so unexpectedly interesting that many people will want to read more. *All you wanted to know about Patristics but were afraid to ask.*

PETER BRADLEY

Marion Morgan, Pilgrim's Guide to the Kingdom, Shoreline Books, £4.50.

Anne Shells, Dust Glorified, Shoreline Books, £6.50.

Shoreline Books, founded in 1990, aims to make new and existing writings from within particular Christian traditions available to readers from other traditions, as well as publishing and distributing matter of current ecumenical interest.

Pilgrim's Guide to the Kingdom, as Gerard Hughes says in the foreword, shows the 'earthed quality' of the author's thought, 'which makes it such a valuable contribution to the most neglected ministry in the Church, the ministry of lay person to lay person.' Marion Morgan is Secretary to

the Greater Bristol Ecumenical Council and she has written for people of all denominations in their widely varying lives as they work for the Kingdom.

She uses as a framework the Spiritual Exercises of S. Ignatius and offers an overall perspective full of real examples from her own and others pilgrimage, with chapters on the elements of Christian life. Her hope - that 'it will contribute to giving us a renewed sense of our own value, and of God's unimaginable love for us' - will surely be fulfilled for those who read her books. Marion Morgan has also written a 20 page booklet, 'Prayer for our Time: the way of S. Ignatius of Loyola', Mirfield Publications, £1.20.

Dust Glorified is a small gem of a book, part Anne Shells, own story and the gradual unfolding of a mystical experience, part an anthology of beautiful quotations about dust. The real brilliance is in the shining light of her faith that our dust, of which humanity is formed, will be transformed 'from glory to glory' as we are renewed through love.

ELZABETH CSF

Kenneth Leech, *The Eye of the Storm: spiritual resources for the pursuit of justice*, DLT, £15.95.

Kenneth Leech writes out of passionate conviction that to be true to the Gospel, Christian spirituality must be worked out in confrontation with the issues that beset the contemporary world. In tracing the influences that have shaped the patterns, and sometimes the dichotomies, of Christian understanding and action he draws on a considerable range of material, both theoretical and from his own experience. At times the breadth of the analysis had me out of my depth, lacking sufficient knowledge to test the validity of some specific conclusions; but that has left me not confused, but wanting to know more and having been given sufficient guidance to know where to start.

In other ways, too, this is a demanding book in its insistence that spirituality is never comfortable and cannot be privatised. It is this quality which will make it such a valuable resource for anyone struggling to ground her/his search for God in the messy reality of life. As the author concludes: 'Our spiritual pilgrimage is not within an artificial religious world, but within the real world in which coal is mined and lemon meringue pie is made, the world in which companies are taken over and homeless people die on the streets, the world in which wars are declared and millions long for peace and justice.'

PAT CSF

Ritamarie Bradley, *Julian's Way: a practical commentary on Julian of Norwich*, Harper Collins, £7.95.

Of the making of books on Julian of Norwich there seems to be no end. The author of this latest work is a Roman Catholic member of the ecumenical 'Sisters for Christian Community' and a Professor Emerita at S. Ambrose University in Iowa. Certainly its academic roots show, despite the subtitle's promise of being a 'practical commentary'.

It reads rather as a series of independent or semi-independent sections, some substantial (36 pages on the parable of the lord and the servant), some very short (1 page headed 'God is in all'). The approach is thematic rather than chapter by chapter; the usefulness of this in terms of bringing together scattered material is marred by the absence of an index of the passages studied.

The overall index is patchy; there is, for example, no entry for 'laughter' despite five fascinating pages on how Julian departs radically from standard medieval and patristic strictures against laughter. This section is a good example of the general approach of the author. Julian is set in the context of her time and of the tradition, and then her originality is demonstrated, and the ways in which she reinterprets the tradition in the light of her Revelations.

Fascinating stuff, much of it, but it is

hard to be sure quite who this book is for. It is certainly not for beginners in Julian, and despite the subtitle not for those looking for the practical rather than the theoretical. It is probably best consulted in sections (if one can find the desired one) than read right through. Used in this way, it should find a place on the shelves of those already well-versed in the Revelations, and enthusiastic to learn more.

HELEN JULIAN CSF

Sr Frances Teresa OSC, *Living the Incarnation - Praying with Francis and Clare of Assisi*, DLT, £5.99.

The chapters of this encouraging book fall into three sections: Conversion, Contrition, and Communion, which, as the author says, 'can only come to meet us where we are at any given moment.'

Sr Frances Teresa of the Arundel Poor Clares supplies us with answers to the questions people so frequently ask us: What is the point of your life? What do you do all day? and reminds us 'We tend to see ourselves only as we are now, but God never loses sight of what we are becoming'.

It is fascinating to read how someone

lives out the inspiration of Francis and Clare through their writings which are interwoven in this text with thought-provoking insights. Quotations from source documents are well noted, with S. Clare's writings and the Canticle of Creation being the author's own translations. The author takes a realistic look at the two saints: 'When we look at Francis and Clare it can seem to us that they lived in a kind of perpetual delight but how did they cope?' 'For Clare, too, the bitter mystery of unanswered prayer...' 'For Francis, the path to integrity through the failure of his dream.'

She also stresses the creative and nurturing aspects of Gospel living: 'The Church was founded to bear Good News. Mary was the mother of that news made human.' 'We are called to be mothers of Christ in each other.' 'Because they loved them so much, Francis and Clare were always greatly encouraging to their companions.'

I suspect this book has already been well read in our Franciscan households and all journeying towards God will find in it a further impetus to speed them on their way.

DAMIAN CSCJ

Dates for your diaries

VOCATION EVENT

**Exploring Religious Life
25 September**

Westminster, London

A day event run by Anglican religious for those between 18 and 40 who wish to understand more about the Religious Life
Full details from Br John Francis SSF,
S. Francis House, 113 Gillott Rd,
Birmingham, B16 0ET. Phone 021-454-8302

HILFIELD

**Stigmata Festival
18 September, 12 noon**

(please bring your own lunch)

**One World Day
16 October, 10.00 am**

An opportunity at the beginning of One World Week to reflect on and pray for world peace

(please bring a packed lunch)

**Advent Quiet Day
4 December, 10.00 am**

To prepare for Christmas
(please bring a packed lunch)

COMPTON DURVILLE

**Prayer and painting retreat
15-19 November**

ALNMOUTH

**Celebrating Francis
18 September**

At S. Nicholas' Cathedral, Newcastle
11.00 am - 4.00 pm
(please bring your own lunch)

**Christian Pacifism in the 90s
October 16**

a mission day led by Revd Sidney Hinkes of the Anglican Pacifist Fellowship
(please bring a packed lunch)

**Me and my shadow
October 29-31**

Stage 2 of the Myers-Briggs. Previous attendance at a Myers-Briggs Basic weekend is required
Leader: Br Jude

**Sounds of silence
November 12-14**

Unconducted silent weekend with music played during meals

**Day in preparation for Advent
November 27**

led by Revd Brian Cowen
(please bring a packed lunch)

Contemplating contemplatives

by Sister Gillian Clare CSCJ

In early June the Service des Moniales for France held a general Assembly in Strasbourg. The theme was the monastic life for women in Europe today.

There were about one hundred and twenty participants, mostly nuns from France, but there were also representatives from Norway, Poland, Portugal, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland, and representatives from the men's monastic orders, while an ecumenical element was supplied by Mother Maria Balan of the monastery of Agapia, Rumania, and Sister Gillian Clare from Freeland.

We heard of the history of some communities, of the relations with communism in Poland, of the reunification of Germany, of the different but thriving forms of ecumenical contact in Norway and Switzerland, of the developments in Rumania since the end of communism ('Orthodoxy is a different world' said one sister) and of the experience of one small Anglican community.

The final speaker, the abbot of Kergonan, felt that the monastic life had something to say to the European Community. It was certainly clear that many communities had practical experience of people from different nations living together in the limited space of the monastic life and with a commitment to staying together. It was also clear that the links within the monastic families already leap over the frontiers.

But when one young sister suggested that her generation already saw a Europe without frontiers, there was a rapid answer from an older sister who thought that the absence of frontiers would entail the risk of losing character; it is because of differences of personality or of nation that we have something to exchange and to contribute to one another. This point also applied to the roles of monastic communities and other parts of the Church.

One speaker, giving a view 'from outside the enclosure', spoke of the one baptismal commitment which is common to all and also of the way in which the monastic life is one gift to the Church. The abbot of Kergonan, speaking of the future of the monastic life, spoke of communities of prayer as places where people discovered vocations of all kinds. This is one form of service to the rest of the Church.

Another is the living out in practice of a certain stability in a world where everything seems increasingly precarious: peace, the family, employment. There is a temptation for people to look for instant satisfaction, like switching channels on TV until something appeals. We can provide places of retreat (for others!) where there is a



Joyce CSF

Cloister at Sacro Convento, Assisi

community living through the inevitable problems, a place where people are facing their weaknesses and surviving the difficulties. Community does not efface personality but allows it to develop through these difficulties.

There should be an integration of the whole of life, material and spiritual, in an order which is directed towards union with God. It is in this sense that the monastic life can give an example of what the European Community can become, a unity directed towards the spiritual, (for a truly human reality cannot be based on purely material foundations). The future is one which we cannot imagine but which will not happen without us.

Living in paschal hope is not the least of our contributions to the new evangelisation of Europe. Another major contribution today is hospitality, so that people who come to us may find a community, a place where there is worship, and a certain stability. The need to be fully human, which is not possible without being indwelt by God, was highlighted by contrast with the horrors going on in Bosnia. As we are human, however, there have to be limits

to our hospitality or we try to go beyond our strength.

What can be offered, within our abilities, is a presence, availability, listening, beauty, and the time to be with God which one needs in order to 'tame oneself' (as the fox says in St Exupery's story of *The Little Prince*), for the essential is a house where God who is love dwells and can be consciously met.

As always with these conferences, much of the value lay in the personal contacts, the friendships made or renewed, the correspondence - sometimes for many years - which took on human faces. There is an awareness of some common pattern of life and values which makes even the first contacts easy, for these are not total strangers and the names of brother or sister are not mere formality. The contacts with Benedictines, Cistercians, Carmelites, Visitandines, Poor Clares, Dominicans, a Passionist sister and others all help to weave new bonds. If Europe - and the world - are to build a future of peace and understanding, such contacts will be needed at all levels.